

Westwood Park Association Landscape Design Guidelines

Approved by WPA Board in April 2023

Introduction

With the recent drought conditions in California, the Westwood Park Association of San Francisco's Board ("Board") is sensitive to homeowners' desire to remove lawns and plants that require heavy watering. The Board has determined that an addendum to the WPA Residential Design Guidelines is necessary to accommodate current drought conditions. We hope this document will be helpful as homeowners consider modifications.

Westwood Park Residential Design Guidelines regarding front yards state:

"Areas in front setbacks for landscaping were the major focus of the Westwood Park developers in the creation of a garden atmosphere for the area. Every effort should be made to minimize pavement for driveways and walkways so that the maximum area in the front of the residence can be used for planting. Large areas of pavement in the front of buildings are **unacceptable**." [emphasis added]

With the continuing drought conditions in California, homeowners may want to remove large areas of lawn and replace it with something that requires much less water. Items such as gravel, pavers, or rock *may* be appropriate *if* it is complemented with planting, flowers, or shrubs. For example, replacing a lawn area with decorative rock or bark would utilize much less water and would be suitable *only* if plants were added throughout the area. Decorative rock or bark without plants would not be suitable and be in violation of the Residential Design Guidelines. While this addendum does not address the ratio of planted to the non-planted area, homeowners are encouraged to keep in mind the original developers' intent to create a garden-like environment in Westwood Park. This would mean more drought-resistant planting is desirable.

Permeable and Impermeable Surfaces

Landscaping in front of homes create a soothing neighborhood environment. Landscaped areas can slow and reduce water runoff, conserving more water during times of drought. It is important to understand what kind of surfaces may be used in any landscape.

What is a permeable surface?

Permeable surfaces allow water to be absorbed without significant runoff.

Permeable surfaces include:

- Soil or other ground cover with a sufficiently rapid infiltration rate to eliminate surface runoff.
- A groundcover that is capable of absorbing water including materials such as stone mulch, woodchip mulch, shrubs and turf or vegetative elements.
- Driveway surfaces designed and capable of supporting a motorized vehicle, but which can be penetrated by surface water and/or storm water to allow such water to be absorbed into the ground. The term "permeable" surface shall not include gravel or other aggregate

but does include both permeable pavers and/or porous asphalt which is designed and intended as a permeable surface.

- A surface that can be penetrated by water and includes, but is not limited to, pervious concrete, porous asphalt, unit pavers, granular materials, landscaping, or other similar material approved by the Westwood Park Board.
- Water can pass through the material.
- Ground surface that allows for the absorption of water and is not covered by a structure or materials that would prevent the absorption of water.
- Soil or other ground cover with a sufficiently rapid infiltration rate to eliminate surface runoff.

Permeable surfaces and paving stones should be utilized on driveways and properties to reduce the impact of storm-water run-off. For example: (1) Roof runoff into cisterns or rain barrels; (2) Roof runoff onto vegetated areas; (3) Walkway/patio runoff onto vegetated areas; (4) Driveway/uncovered parking lot runoff onto vegetated areas; (5) Permeable surfaces for walkways, patios; and (6) Permeable surfaces for driveways, bike lanes, uncovered parking lots.

What is an impermeable surface?

Impermeable surfaces are defined as a surface or pavement constructed and maintained to a standard sufficient to prevent the transmission of liquids beyond the pavement surface and should be read in conjunction with the term “sealed drainage system.”

The following surface materials are **not approved** for use in Westwood Park in place of lawn area:

- Asphalt
- Concrete
- Cinderblocks and other similar pavers
- San Francisco cobbles and other similar stone pavers

Planting recommendations

There are many resources for suggestions of suitable plants and shrubs for the climate in our San Francisco neighborhood. Some resources include:

- The Yerba Buena chapter of the California Native Plant Society: <http://cnps-yerbabuena.org/gardening/>
- San Francisco Conservatory of Flowers: <https://conservatoryofflowers.org/>
- Sunset Magazine: <https://www.sunset.com/home-garden/landscaping/low-water-gardening-guide-newsletter>

Fencing

Guidance regarding front yard fencing can be found in the Westwood Park Covenants Conditions and Restrictions (C.C.&R.), Section V. Restriction of Fences. This document can be found at: <https://westwoodparksf.org/ccrs/>

“All lots in said tract for a space of thirty (30) feet back from the front street shall be and remain unfenced. All fences constructed upon any side line of said lots shall not extend nearer to the front street than thirty (30) feet measured along said side line. As to all corner lots, the fence or boundary wall along the line of the side street shall not extend to any point within thirty (30) feet of the line of the front street and said fence or boundary wall shall only be constructed of wire or open metal or brick, stone or concrete, except that the owner of said corner lot may build a side fence of other materials provided that said fence is parallel to said side line and distant at least five (5) feet therefrom. No fence or boundary wall situated anywhere upon any lot shall have a height greater than six (6) feet above the graded surface of the ground upon which said fence or wall is situated.”

Parking Surfaces

Westwood Park was designed as a residence park, with cascading front yards providing our neighborhood character. One of the largest bungalow communities on the west coast, homes were designed for cars to be parked off the street in garages or driveways. Parking is permitted on driveways or garage access routes only as long as they comply with State of California and City of San Francisco laws. Parking is not permitted on sidewalks (California Vehicle Code Section 22500F). Parking vehicles anywhere other than designated driveways is not permitted. Vehicles should not be parked on paved areas that are not driveways.

Front yards may never be paved or modified to create vehicle parking.

Front Yards Not in Compliance

Unfortunately, some front yards have been paved over or modified with impermeable material without the required and desirable landscaping, as modified under a past Westwood Park Association board. The current Board does not wish to punish or require these yards to be restored; however, the Board does have the authority to approve or disapprove new or proposed modifications to front yards.

Rules Enforcement

The Board has the authority to enforce the Guidelines set forth in this document. When the Board is notified of a violation, the Board will notify the homeowner verbally and/or in writing. We hope this will initiate a useful discussion about appropriate measures to bring the front yard modifications into compliance.

If these discussions are not satisfactory in resolving the violation, the Board will set a hearing date and notify the homeowner in writing at least ten (10) days in advance, either personally or by pre-paid first-class or registered mail to the most recent address of the homeowner. The notice will set forth the date and nature of the violation, the proposed penalty, and the homeowner's right to present evidence in his/her defense, either in writing or in person, at the hearing.

Within fifteen (15) days after the Board makes a decision on imposition of any penalty or fine, notice of the decision must be given to the homeowner, which must specify the violation and the penalty imposed.

The Board may request internal dispute resolution to amicably resolve the issue before filing suit for actions with a money claim in an amount within the jurisdiction of the small claims court.

In Summary: Check First Before Any Renovation

We hope these Guidelines will be helpful to homeowners who are considering modifying their front yards. We want to keep the Westwood Park aesthetic as the original park-like setting that the developers envisioned, with inviting front yards to create a welcoming environment.

So before removing your front yard landscaping, check with the Westwood Park Association Board, whose contact information is available on the web site at www.westwoodparksf.org. A cursory review of your modification will be performed to ensure compliance with these guidelines. You do not want to incur additional expense or unnecessary delay if your plans are not in keeping with the Westwood Park Residential Design Guidelines.

Contact the Board

If you need additional information, contact the Board at board@westwoodpark.com or call (415) 333-1125. Our mailing address is: Westwood Park Association, 236 West Portal Avenue, No. 770, San Francisco, CA 94127.

Additional Resources

San Francisco Planning Department "Guidelines Ground floor Frontage Design"
https://sfplanning.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/Guidelines_Groundfloor_Frontage.pdf